

Basher Community Council Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2011
Baxter Elementary School, 7:00 pm

Meeting was called to order by President Dirk Sisson at 7:06 pm

Guests: Paul Honeman, Anchorage Assembly, James Dennis Anchorage Fire Department, Station 14, Sue Rodman and Jason Kohler, Anchorage Fire Department (AFD), Wildfire Mitigation Office, Dawn Brantley, Anchorage Office of Emergency Management.

Attendance: 8 signed in

May 6, 2010 minutes were approved with no amendments.

Legislative Report: Mike Hawker asked if there was anything on the community wish list.

AFD Update, James Dennis, Station 14:

AFD plans to finish building the fire truck Turnaround at Station 14. It will be located between the station and the school.

AFD is moving forward with an emergency housing agreement with the school—would be enough to house entire community in event of an evacuation situation (such as fire).

AFD is trying to hire an academy group of 20-30. The department is understaffed right now and behind in training.

Rick Kullberg asked about the easement to the pond on Midden—is there any obligation on the part of the homeowner to maintain it?

James Dennis responded that there is no obligation to brush it, but if the fire department can't get a truck to the pond, they will run a longer hose, so they really only need a narrow path. The last time they used that water source they pumped from the culvert at the road.

Bruce Talbot: the easement is a public right-of-way listed on the plat.

Sue Rodman said that the fire department could brush it, if needed.

James Dennis stated that the fire department does not rely too much on community water sources—they are nice to have, but not reliable. In the event of a fire, they would most likely set up a tender relay. He reminded the community that in rural areas like Stuckagain, the main priority is rescuing people; saving property is secondary.

AFD Wildfire Mitigation Office, Sue Rodman and Jason Kohler:

Fire Hazard Mitigation: Sue Rodman handed out firewise calendars that include information about firewise home assessments. Slots are available for this summer.

Shaded Fuel Break Presentation:

The goal is to create a shaded fuel break on the south side of Stuckagain Heights between the neighborhood and the Middle Fork of Campbell Creek. The proposed fuel break would start near the Basher Trailhead and continue east for 1 mile toward Near Point. The break would be created on CSP land away from homes. To create the shaded fuel break, crews would remove dead and downed spruce trees and evaluate live spruce trees and either prune them up to remove ladder fuels or remove them entirely. The width of the fuel break will be about 200 ft. All work will be done with hand cutting, and

fuels will be piled and burned when conditions are safe for burning—most likely in the fall. The break will follow terrain features, and the ground will not be leveled or disturbed except where the burn piles are located. Birch trees will not be removed, and bare ground created after pile burning will be replanted with birch, fescue, and bluegrass.

In the event of a wildfire, this fuel break would 1) change fire behavior by eliminating the potential for a crown fire and 2) provide an area for fire fighters to make a stand in an area is removed from private property (can lay sprinkler hose, drop retardant, etc.). Firefighters cannot directly fight a crown fire, but they can make a stand against a ground fire.

Kris Mann commented that this proposal is disturbing because it will impact the trail and surrounding forest that is a favorite place of many residents. Jason Kohler and Sue Rodman responded that there are opportunities for modifying the width of the fuel break around trails or other sensitive areas. Only spruce will be removed, and many of those trees are already dead and downed because of bark beetles and wind.

Sue discussed forest structure and the need to modify the structure so that fire behavior can be affected. By removing spruce trees and increasing tree spacing, crown fires can be reduced to ground fires. There are more options for fighting a ground fire than there are for fighting a crown fire.

Barb Hood and Rick Kullberg asked about disturbance to the natural ground cover and potential soil disturbance. Jason Kohler said that the goal is to maintain the natural vegetation, and the creation of the break will not involve any leveling or other disturbance to the ground. They do not want to create a situation where the robust native grass, bluejoint reedgrass, will expand because it is a very flashy fuel, especially in the spring before green-up. Native shrubs and trees such as birch, willow, alder, and rose are desired in the fuel break because they provide shade and are not as flammable as spruce. The proposed fuel break would have more thinning and limbing on the neighborhood side and more tree removal toward the Campbell Creek side. Sue Rodman added that there is a fuel break off Nettleton Rd that runs toward the top of the ski jump at Hilltop that is very similar to the one they are planning in Stuckagain. The difference is that there will be no log skidding in Stuckagain.

Rick Kullberg asked if Campbell Creek might provide a natural fire break. Jason responded that the creek is not wide enough—crown fires typically spot ¼ mile in advance of the flaming front, and the canyon would create strong winds and actually accelerate the fire. Also, there are downed trees along the canyon walls that would impede fire fighting and provide dangerous fuels.

Bruce Talbot asked if the crews could fix the trail switchback near the Basher Trailhead while working on the fuel break. Sue Rodman said this was a possibility.

Jason Kohler also discussed his plan for smoke mitigation during pile burning.

Emergency Preparedness, Dawn Brantley, Anchorage Office of Emergency Management (OEM):

Dawn Brantley gave a brief presentation on emergency preparedness focusing on personal preparedness. Households should be prepared to self-support for 5-7 days in the event of an emergency. Dawn outlined the basic steps in preparedness:

- 1) Have an emergency supply kit (see the muni.org/oem or Ready.gov websites). In addition to the basic kit, don't forget to include cash and prescription medication (keep a copy of prescriptions with emergency kit). Also plan contingencies for pets.

- 2) Have an emergency plan (see above websites). Have an out-of state-contact (for folks to call to check on your status in case it is hard to get through to AK).
- 3) Be informed (see above websites).

In the event of a major emergency, the muni would initially focus on life-saving activities and restoring critical services like power, water, and nursing facilities. Educating the community prior to a disaster helps to relieve stress on the relief effort.

OEM can give presentations on topics of choice—so if there is a group that is interested in a specific topic related to preparedness, contact OEM. OEM also offers community training such as CPR, 1st Aid, and ham radio operator.

The Disaster Registry (muni.org/oem/registry/cfm) is a service provided by OEM and AnchorRIDES to 1) identify residents with disabilities who may need evacuation assistance and 2) better serve the special need population during evacuation and sheltering.

The Emergency Watch program is a good way to amplify the personnel effort. The emphasis is on neighbors helping neighbors. To get the program started, 2 community members come to a free training at OEM, and then once a year OEM will come out to your neighborhood to run a scenario.

Assembly report, Paul Honeman

Paul Honeman gave a brief update on Anchorage Assembly activities: at the Tuesday meeting the Assembly approved the bond proposals and ballot advisories that will appear on the April ballot. The bonds include a school bond for Service High and bonds for fire a fire truck replacement and road maintenance. The proposal to put the tax cap issue on the ballot was not approved. A ballot advisory regarding ID checks at liquor stores aimed at prohibiting people with “red-stripes” on their IDs from purchasing alcohol was approved.

The municipality is currently projecting a \$20 million surplus. It takes months to hire and train staff to fill fire department positions and police force vacancies—by not hiring and training staff, the community will not have the services they have already paid for.

LRSA update

Status quo for road maintenance, \$100,000 in bank reserve. No big improvements are planned for the summer. Oiling will occur this summer as usual.

Campbell Airstrip Road upgrade

Bruce Talbot gave an update on the Campbell Airstrip Road improvements: CRW was selected as the contractor. It is not likely that the design phase will be far enough along to request additional funding from the legislature for this year, probably best to wait until next year.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Tina Boucher
Secretary, BCC